2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

to roost. 'Let's ask riddles,' intervenes Khiebe. 'Here's one: Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree (*thaiii*), the witches are dancing on the thorns.' 'Stupid,' scornfully rejoins Muduma. 'We all know that one. Hailstones, of course, for they bounce as they fall on the grass.' After pondering a moment he challenges: '*Thaiii*, the ox of my father has entered the pool, I remain holding its tail.' Roars of derision issue from the rest, 'A porridge-twirler,' they answer almost all together. The spiked head of a twirler is like the horns of an ox; it is thrust into the pot of water, while one holds it by its handle. 'Here's something you don't know,' comes from Mudumpani. '*Thaiii*, the nest of the water bird hangs down over the pool.' The company is silent, then there are some guesses, but it is beyond them, and they give it up. 'The eyelashes, of course,' says Mudumpani, 'because they hang over one's eyes.' Once the ball starts rolling, riddles follow one another in rapid succession. 'The babbling of a brook' turns out to be a calabash cup, for down its long handle beer gurgles as you drink; 'They always stand looking at each other' are the doorposts of a hut; and 'The chief entering the crimson (muddy) pool' is sunset. It is impossible to capture the poetry of these riddles; you cannot render their alliteration or play upon words in English. But it is clear that these youngsters are well versed in them. The time when riddles are most popular is, however, when a wedding party is present and the young people have to entertain them in their hut. On such an occasion riddles provide a mild form of competition between the two parties, that of the bride and that of the groom.

The men have retired to their huts, whence they will not reappear. The women have eaten the evening meal informally round the fire and are just chatting. In a hut three girls are sitting by candlelight, one of them, who has been to school, writing a love-letter for her friend to her lover in town. 'Why are you throwing me over?' she asks. 'Why don't you write? Please send me a nice cloth and a blanket, but not one like that which you gave your wife!' In another hut some children have persuaded Mamojaji, an elderly woman, to tell them tales. She begins, '*Dgano-Dgano* (a story, a story).' They reply, '*Dgano*.' 'Once upon a time,' she continues, but before she gets further they again interject, '*Dgano*.' Then she goes on, 'There lived a boy who had sores all over his body.' '*Dgano*,' they repeat whenever the speaker hesitates or takes breath. 'One day when the girls went to fetch grass. . . .' This is the beginning of a story about a bird who gives away the girls who kill the boy. A marked characteristic is the frequent occurrence of a song or refrain, during the telling of the tale, in this case, '*Phapa, Phapa ya Dawa*, &c. ('Bird, bird of the south'), so that what with the interjections and singing of the chorus of the refrain, the listeners appear to take as active a part in the story as the narrator herself. At the end of each tale there is a long-drawn-out '*Dgaaaaa*' and all spit into the fire. In the small villages of to-day story-telling has almost completely died out. Where there are only one or two present a story loses most of its charm, and there are many young men and women who know practically no stories, more particularly among Christians, whose parents prefer them to learn their lessons rather than tell them stories.

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

584 courting visits are paid by the boy without seeing the girl at all. He is
431 entertained by the bridesmaids. After a few such visits, the boy will give 10s. or £1 to 'see the girl', to remove this taboo. The bride and her sisters similarly avoid all brothers of the groom till they *see* her by means of a small gift after the marriage. One often sees such boys teasing these girls to try to get an answer to some question, but they keep resolutely silent. Owing to the ramifications of the classificatory system, there are areas such as the queen's district, where most of the inhabitants are related in some way. Here many men and women cannot speak to each other because the men cannot afford to *see* all the brides of the family. After some years the women will tire of the avoidance and begin to speak to these men.

●585 On arrival at the village of the husband, a bride avoids every one (by
431 not speaking) till given a small gift. Her mother-in-law gives her a gift
606 during the first week while she is still secluded, but the father-in-law usually waits longer. On the arrival of any visitor, the bride will lie down on her side in respectful salutation till given some small gift. As soon as a boy begins to avoid his prospective bride, he avoids also her mother. They may not be together in the same hut, the mother may not serve food to the boy, and, should they happen to come near each other, the woman will evert or partially cover her head. But whereas avoidance between groom and bride ends before marriage, that between a man and his mother-in-law ends usually about a year after the marriage, when the woman is given 10s. or a blanket. Andreas gave 15s. after the birth of his first child. Nevertheless, a man will always take care never to talk loudly or angrily in the company of his mother-in-law. If he does, she will walk away and if a man were to have words with his mother-in-law or scold her in a bout of drunkenness, he would have to pay a pardon goat to her family.

607 The most lasting form of avoidance is that between a man and his wife's brother's wife, especially the one who has been obtained with the cattle he handed over for his wife and who will bear the future wife of his son. Frieda always covers her face when meeting her husband's sister's husband. If he is in a hut, she may not enter it. Beyond exchanging greetings, she does not sit with him or talk directly to him and she may not herself serve him with food. The uterine sister of the husband of
[835] Madinji married Nagumbi and so, according to all the rules, she should avoid him; but in reality she is his lover. He, Madinji, is known to be the father of one of her, Nagumbi's, children, yet they are not socially ostracised nor have their actions been publicly condemned.

835 That this sort of breach of accepted standards is neither directly punished nor actively disapproved, unless forcibly brought before the public eye in a case, is in keeping with the haphazard nature of Lovedu social arrangements. Lejaeule, who, on the death of his parents, came to live with his grandfather (mother's mother's brother), has had four children by the wife of his mother's brother, the son of his grandfather, though he himself is a married man. We were at first inclined to attribute this state of affairs partly to culture contact conditions, which have kept the woman's husband in town, though not determining her choice of

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

585
292

XII. THE BRIDE BECOMES A WIFE

(a) "LITTLE BRIDE OF HOME, SHE SMILES"

(b) FULL OF HER POWER, THE BRIDE BEGINS WORKING

[facing p. 145]

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

supreme consequence in supporting the structure that the marriage will 584
eventually build up. Courtship visits are concerned, not with courting, but with laying the foundations of the new pattern of reciprocity between the young people. They were cross-cousins before, free and easy in their relations with one another; after the marriage they are in-laws, between whom the delicate balance of adult privileges and responsibilities must be evenly maintained.

The courtship visits have other functions. They would hardly appeal to the young if there were no lighter side to the heavy burden of their serious purpose. All Lovedu ceremonial recognizes the need for diversity, for dramatic interest, for ringing the changes between the serious and the superficial, the purposeful and the playful, the grave and the comic. The bridegroom, unseen by his bride though he be, has a thrill in displaying his best clothes. He sometimes deliberately breaks taboos. In the old days the *mundubile* used to 'reveal' the bride, for only after it the bridegroom could see her and speak to her in private, a privilege he obtains to-day by a gift of a few shillings or more (*ku nesa*) long before the *mundubile* is given. Nevertheless, there is to-day adventure in going to the store, where, besides making her wishes felt by requiring this or that as part of her *mundubile* (change of clothes), the bride must be coaxed by gifts to look at one thing, to handle another, and at every step. After he brings the calabash of water, 'the beast of making the bride to come home with him', the bridegroom and his companion come on the *ku zila* visit. *Ku zila* means that they will 'trouble' the girl and her companions. In other tribes the parents have to be 'begged' to release the bride; the Lovedu *ku zila* is designed to irritate the parents so that they will be impatient of the bride's unwillingness to go and will bring pressure to bear upon her. For the *mampondo* has all passed and the will of the bride must not be allowed to cause them discomfort. The boy's companion especially makes things unpleasant. He interferes with the work of the girls, worries and annoys them at night when they want to sleep. He tries to stir their hearts by playing a plaintive stringed instrument, pinches and beats them. But what is really effective is his interference with their cooking: he throws sticks and filth into the porridge pots, and the older people, always particular about the cleanliness of their food, complain bitterly and say that the bride had better go. [431]

The drama ends usually with an exciting 'elopement' of the couple. 585
It is not a true but an institutionalized elopement. Sometimes it does 431
not occur and sometimes it occurs even after a religious ceremony with which, strictly speaking, it is incompatible. Indeed, theoretically the giving of the *mundubile* is supposed to exclude resort to an elopement. But the 'elopement' is so common that it is the only form usually described. One night the bridegroom, having left 11., 'the thing resting under the mat', which in the old days was an arrow, surreptitiously escapes with the bride and her companions. The 'thing under the mat' explains the flight. The journey to the bridegroom's village is painfully slow: at each stop the girls call a halt and have to be persuaded by gifts (*ku nesa*) to move on; they may even have to be pushed, threatened, carried. The bride is completely covered with a blanket amid the troop of girls as they

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

585 431 walk in single file. The bride (and sometimes her companions too) weeps, fearful of the new life full of responsibilities. They visit the boy's cattle-linked sister to be offered a goat and as a reminder that it is that sister who with her cattle has erected the new home. There may be a dumb show as the girls, marching up and down, display their final reluctance to give up the bride and, by contrast, the old women humorously mock the girls. At the gate of the boy's village they have to be carried in, and at last, as they humbly crawl to enter the hut, some one pours water on the roof and you hear the song, 'Little bride of ochre, seek shelter, you are raining wet'.

This is merely the general plan; there are many embellishments and many variations. But of some significance and worth mentioning as illustrative of the comprehensive nature of the ceremonial are the last few gifts just before the bride leaves home. There is a goat or 10s. to 'lift' the bride from maiden to wife, for every important new step she takes may, in Lovedu phraseology, be made the occasion for asking something; another goat to 'take out the stamping block', symbolizing the transference of the bride's *chief* economically productive power; and still another to 'finish the complaints' of the bride's mother. Among neighbouring tribes there are similar gifts, but sometimes with different names and often, though having the same name, with different functions. A study of their reinterpretation by, and merging with the purposes of, each culture cannot be undertaken here. To two points we may, however, briefly refer. Occasionally among the Lovedu there are reciprocal feasts entailing the slaughter of a beast, first by the bride's and then by the bridegroom's family, and ending with an extra beast given by the latter to 'fill up the *mavyaulo*'. These feasts belong to a very different pattern, found, for instance, among the Urwa, where bride and bridegroom before the final acts are made to sit together on a mat, are offered advice and given presents. Secondly, and in strong contrast to many other tribes, the bride comes to her new home without any presents from her people. The troop of girls carry a winnowing basket (*khirudzwana*) in which there are certain grains from the bride's village, but everything else except the grains, even her clothes, have been given her by the bridegroom. Her people give her nothing whatever to set up a new home. Household utensils she does not need, for she cooks in the hut and uses the pots and furniture of her mother-in-law until, with the coming of a younger daughter-in-law, she becomes independent and has her own cooking hut.

585 782 In a really orthodox marriage among the Lovedu there is a religious ceremony. It is preceded by the slaughter of the 'goat of killing' brought by the bridegroom; a leg is given to him and from the skin the bride's *thenyana* (skirt) is made... Thereafter a prayer is offered to the gods on behalf of the girl: 'Here is the woman. We let you know that she is leaving us. She is going to the place where she is married. Let her be happy there; let all she does there be right; let her be smeared with fat [have children]. We have no complaint against her [*i.e.* we shall not cause illness through being angry and so also you should not]; we have given her beads to help her so that she may make a good home where she

2: Krige and Krige E-5 (1928-1939)1943
FX14 Lovedu FX14

is going.' It is, of course, an extempore prayer, not bound to any set words. After this rite there is no need to elope; it is *ku nga*, to marry with proper rites, not *ku pala*, to run away surreptitiously. Yet the secret elopement by night is so interesting that it frequently follows, and in any case the slow journey of the troop of girls, who must be persuaded at every step, is always part of the ceremony.

The final stage of the marriage ceremonial consists of several successive steps lasting a month or longer. Again a whole series of new gifts (*mawusi*) passes and new rites are enacted. From early morning until late at night the bride's companions are busy—cooking, stamping mealies, bringing water for the inmates of the village to wash in, and in other ways. At night there are contests of riddles between the visiting girls and the boys and girls of the village; they are ordinary riddles (*dikhai*), not those curious *dinyelo* that end the initiation, but the pattern of the institution is the same. There is, for instance, the *ku nusa* of the girls at every turn and their exaggerated politeness. Then, after a week, having fetched wood and distributed among themselves the gifts received, the bride's companions go home, crawling out of the village and accompanied some way by the boys. The bride is now alone and, still in her finery, she begins to do the household work. When she menstruates for the first time, she secretly 'flees the moon' (*ku shawa mundi*), running to an old woman, who takes her back with beer of 'shunning the moon' and a goat is killed for her. This shunning of the moon is a minor detail in marriage ceremonial, with rules and observances, however, in which the virginity of the bride, the part played by the go-between, the division of the beer and meat, the reciprocal duties of the *nwaakhale* and the *nghokolo*, the one giving beer, the other returning a goat, are once more emphasized.

But all the rites and ceremonies are equally full of meaning, not only for the purpose in hand, but for the Whole social structure. About three or four weeks after the marriage the bride goes to her home with the goat or ox. of 'pouring out her brideshood' (*ku shulla wunyoli*), and thereafter, according to ideal standards, the bridegroom may exercise full marital rights. This 'pouring out', with its associated observances, is still universally carried out, though the couple may already have received permission to cohabit. If the bridegroom migrates to town, as sometimes happens, before the home-bringing of the bride, the breach of orthodox rules, implied by the premature permission, is avoided. After a while the bride returns and brings the beer to 'open the way' for her mother. In the old days the boy's people then sent the *ku hakela* goat, the goat 'of asking permission' for the consummation of the marriage. At the stage when permission to cohabit is given, the couple are ritually mixed, the ceremony varying from mutual inoculation to common steaming under a blanket: it is a rite pregnant with meaning and with the associations it acquires as being a part of many other ritual occasions. The bride becomes an apprentice to her mother-in-law, there are avoidances and gifts (*mawusi*) to remove them and so, at every stage, the marriage ceremonial is cut to the configuration of the social structure, fitted into its foundations and walls, and made to merge into the smallest details of its ornamentation.

3: Krige E-5 (1928-1938)1938 FX14 Lovedu FX14

583 [624] be handed over to the lender to become, in most cases, the wife of his son. To-day this custom is not as common as it used to be, owing to the fact that girls now often resist such a marriage, knowing that the European authorities will support them. No cattle or presents from the girl's people are ever handed over in marriage, and there is therefore nothing corresponding to the Zulu-Xhosa *eukua*. But there is all over the Lowveld a special name and function associated with each beast and goat that is handed over, which, together with the fact that there is generally no fixed number, no organized bargaining, such as that which characterizes Pedi procedure, and that very few people complete payment of bride-price before marriage, illustrate the non-commercial character of this arrangement.

•585 The most characteristic feature of marriage ceremonial in the Lowveld is the slow and tedious procession from the girl's to the boy's home, the bridal party having to be persuaded to move at each step by means of gifts, till finally on reaching their destination they have to be carried in on the backs of women from the boy's home, weeping loudly in their distress. There is no central marriage feast, though a goat is killed for the girls who accompany the bride, and no one from the girl's home, except for the bridesmaids, is present. The brilliant competitive dancing displays, mutual vituperations between the two families and general feasting which form part of Nguni marriage ceremonial, all are conspicuously absent in this area where the arrival of a bride hardly disturbs the even tenor of everyday life. It is of common occurrence for a bride, before arrival at her husband's kraal, to be taken to the village of the sister whose cattle the husband has used in the marriage. The sister must see the woman who will bear a wife for her son and will kill a goat in her honour. Blood-mixing ceremonies between bride and bridegroom to eliminate all dangers of sex intercourse are common over the whole area.

586 Barrenness and adultery are not grounds for divorce, though when a woman is barren her parents generally offer her sister, for whom, however, cattle must again be handed over. A peculiar feature of divorce in the Lowveld to-day is that the husband almost always keeps both the children and the cattle, except in rare cases where it can be proved that he has wrongfully driven away his wife, when he receives neither children nor cattle.